



Date: June 26, 2025
Time: 5:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Location: Horsetooth Area Info Center - 4200 W. County Rd. 38E Fort Collins, CO 80526 – Mountain Lion Room & Zoom Webinar

OPEN LANDS ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

MEMBERS		STAFF		GUESTS
Jim Wurz	I	Daylan Figgs	I	
Debbie Hayhow	I	Meegan Flenniken	I	
Gale Bernhardt	I	Justin Core	I	
Tom Shoemaker	I	*Jody Shadduck-McNally	V	
Linda Stanley	V	Andrea Weber (minutes)	I	
Wes Knoll	I	Casey Cisneros	I	
Gary Miller	I	Lesli Ellis	I	
Ward Nelson	I			
Mike Carter	I			
Ellis Carpenter	I			

V = virtual attendee

I = in-person attendee

A = absent

*commissioner

Call to Order – 5:00 pm

Agenda Review

Review and Approval of Last Minutes

Tom moved to approve the minutes from March meeting, Gary seconded, motion passed unanimously.

Mike moved to approve the minutes from April meeting, Jim seconded, motion passed unanimously.

Information and Announcements

Natural Resources events for this month: <https://larimer.org/naturalresources>.

To sign up for Open Lands Advisory Board updates, go to <https://apps.larimer.org/subscriptions.cfm>, enter your email, click “Subscribe,” and check the “Open Lands Advisory Board” box.

Great Outdoors Colorado 2025 Starburst Award – Canyon Edge Open Space

- Meegan noted the award will be presented by GOCO at the August 5th Board of County Commissioners Admin Matters session and at the COSA conference in October.

Update and Reports

Board of County Commissioners Update

- Commissioner Shadduck-McNally thanked members Linda and Tom for their years of service and contributions to OLAB, wishing them well in their next ventures.

- She shared that a short water-focused film will be presented during an upcoming Tuesday Admin Matters meeting as a small celebration and opportunity to recognize water-related efforts.

Quarter 1 Board Report

- Daylan highlighted a few projects, including the successful completion of ~5,000 acres of Livermore Conservation Easements and the addition to Red-tail Ridge Open Space.
- Meadow hawkweed was added to Larimer County's noxious weed list, and DNR had a successful spring completion of capital projects on time and under budget. Open marina slots are now filled through a lottery process under new marina contracts at Carter Lake and Horsetooth Reservoir.
- The financial outlook is stabilizing, with sales tax revenues leveling out rather than declining as anticipated. Budget planning for 2026 is underway, taking a conservative approach that can adjust as revenues change.
- Mike asked whether the department has used more or less acquisition dollars to date than anticipated in 2025. Daylan explained that acquisitions are driven by opportunity, and because of land scarcity for key critical parcels, the department front-loaded funds to secure properties when available. As a result, the department is ahead of its land conservation acreage goals. Mike followed up, asking whether this approach fits within the department's financial model. Daylan confirmed it does, noting that 35% of the sales tax is designated for acquisition. Meegan added that only 25% of the total available acquisition funds over the life of the tax has been spent, while the total acreage has surpassed half of the long-term land protection target.
- Tom raised concerns about public awareness of these successes and suggested installing an interpretive sign in the Livermore Valley. Daylan agreed and emphasized the need to better share the story of land conservation. Gale proposed including open space updates in utility bills, and Debbie shared that many residents she's spoken with are unaware of nearby open spaces.

Discussion Items

Ecological Management on Open Spaces – Casey Cisneros

- The Larimer County Weed District was formed in 1967, with a dedicated mill levy established in 1985 (currently at 0.143 mills) to fund invasive plant management in the county's more populated eastern areas. Services offered by the district include site visits, a cost-share program, herbicide sales, educational presentations, and printed materials. The 1995 passage of the Help Preserve Open Spaces (HPOS) tax provides funding for open space vegetation management. The 1998 creation of the Enterprise Program allowed the county to begin working on private lands outside the open spaces and designated weed district.
- Habitat Management Efforts
 - For county open spaces, the primary focus is ecological enhancement and noxious weed management. On private and public lands, the department focuses on education, implementation of vegetation best practices, enforcement of the Colorado Noxious Weed Act, and restoration support in fire- and flood-impacted areas. This includes providing herbicide funding and adaptive management strategies.
- Habitat Management Strategy
 - The overall goal is to achieve ecological outcomes that enhance habitat and soil health. These efforts benefit native plant species, pollinators, biodiversity, and soil stability. The strategy aligns with Larimer County's Climate Strategy and includes actions such as restoring native plant communities, integrated weed management, grazing management, and wildlife-friendly fence conversions.
- Project Spotlight – Keyhole Restoration at Devil's Backbone Open Space
 - A six-acre key viewshed parcel that had previously been used as a motorcycle track is now being restored via removing roads and building footprints, recontouring the land, controlling invasive rye, using cover crops to protect soil, and reestablishing native plant communities.
- Invasive Annual Grass Control
 - The goal is to remove invasive annual grasses such as cheatgrass and feral rye to enhance native shrubland and grassland communities. In 2024, the department treated 1,193 acres at

Canyon Edge Open Space using selective herbicide applications. Monitoring efforts include mapping, plant clippings, pollinator population surveys, and bird surveys in treated areas.

- Tom asked about the per-acre cost of implementing such treatments. Casey responded that it costs approximately \$75 per acre, which includes herbicide application only. Debbie asked how the grasses are removed, and Casey explained that they use Rejuvra, but it's effective only when a healthy understory plant community is already present. Meegan added that the cost is associated with use of helicopter spraying, as they are highly accurate and more cost-effective than ground crews.
- Capital Construction Restoration
 - The goal of these projects is to stabilize and restore ecological function following infrastructure construction. Current efforts include restoration work at Skyview Campground, Carter Lake East Side Day Use Area, and the Kyger Trail Connection. Gary asked whether the county avoids non-native species when revegetating. Casey confirmed that they use only native species.
- Grazing as a Tool
 - The county also uses grazing to achieve habitat heterogeneity. Grazing helps reduce decadent vegetation, increase plant diversity, add habitat complexity, and restore nutrient cycles for improved soil health.
- Terminology
 - A native plant is one that naturally occurs in a specific geographic region and has evolved there over time.
 - A weed typically lacks diversity and ecological function and is difficult to eliminate.
 - Invasive weeds are fast-growing, prolific seeders and tend to dominate disturbed areas while degrading ecosystem function.
 - A noxious weed is one that poses a threat to the environment, economy, or human health.
- The Colorado Noxious Weed Act (CNWA) was passed in 1992 and mandates that municipalities and counties ensure landowner compliance after adjacent land managers have acted. The act is administered by the Colorado Department of Agriculture and defines county-specific objectives: suppression, containment, or eradication. Larimer County enforces the law in unincorporated areas, while municipalities handle enforcement within city limits.
- County-Wide Weed Management Plan
 - The county's weed management plan, first adopted in 2018 and updated in 2023, outlines services, priorities, and compliance procedures. Meadow hawkweed was added to the noxious weed list in 2024 due to its colonizing behavior and displacement of native species, which allows the county to manage it on private lands.
- Integrated Weed Management
 - The goal is to use a combination of methods—prevention, biological, chemical, cultural, and physical—to manage weeds effectively. Project prioritization is based on climate, weed classification, risk, terrain, and transportation vectors.
- Monitoring and Adaptive Management
 - The department's goal is to assess the effectiveness of restoration efforts and ensure that project objectives are met. Benefits include the ability to adapt to unforeseen challenges and save time and resources. Current actions include electric fencing to protect young plants, supplemental seeding, weed control, and adjustments to grazing leases.
- Board Questions
 - Ellis asked about the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation's involvement in cheatgrass control. Casey responded that the RESTORE project was grant-funded to improve elk winter range.
 - Ellis asked about the county's relationship with the state on land management. Casey said the county partners with the state on various projects, for example, Lone Pine State Wildlife Area was included in the RESTORE grant along with county open spaces.
 - Ellis asked whether the state is conducting post-treatment monitoring. Casey responded that both the state and county are conducting monitoring, but not specifically wildlife monitoring, to his knowledge.

- Tom suggested more public visibility of these restoration projects.
- Wes asked whether drones are used in weed control. Casey said drone use is increasing, but helicopters are still the best option at scale.

Action Items

Final Review Fossil Creek Reservoir Drainage Easement

- Justin reviewed a permanent drainage easement on a property co-owned equally by the City of Fort Collins and Larimer County. While Fort Collins handles the management of the property, the adjacent land across the road is owned by the Sanitation District.
- The primary objective of the project is to improve drainage and reduce stormwater flow over Carpenter Road. The proposed solution is to install a culvert that would redirect stormwater from 6 acres of sanitation district land and 24 acres of natural area into Duck Lake, rather than allowing it to flow along the road. Water from the sanitation district will be treated before entering the culvert system using retention ponds and vegetative swales.
- Additional project elements include installing turn lanes and culverts, all of which will be completed before next year's wildlife migration season and will follow city restoration standards. A 3,200 square-foot conservation easement will be paid out to compensate a private landowner for \$3,100 (split equally between the city and county). An additional \$3,900 will be paid by the Sanitation District to the City to cover future mitigation and maintenance.
- Wes asked whether Duck Lake serves any functional purpose. No one was certain. Meegan confirmed that the city's restoration standards require native vegetation. Tom noted that the Fort Collins board reviewed alternative options and determined this to be the best one.
- Ward moved to approve the easement, Mike seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Other Business

- The County Commissioners may reopen the OLAB board member application process.
- Tom offered parting remarks, thanking the board and emphasizing the significant impact this work has had on his life. He acknowledged the immense effort required to bring projects together and secure funding. Linda also thanked the board, noting her involvement since the 1990s.

Next Meeting Scheduled

Thursday, July 24th, 2025 - Larimer County Longview Health Services Building 2260 W. Trilby Road, Fort Collins 80526 – Goldfinch/Sparrow Room & Zoom Webinar

Executive Session

Pursuant to C.R.S. (24-6-402(4)(a)) for discussion pertaining to the purchase, acquisition, lease, transfer or sale of any real, personal or other property interest.

Adjournment – 6:28 pm

Per the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Larimer County will provide a reasonable accommodation to qualified individuals with a disability who need assistance. Services can be arranged with at least seven (7) business days' notice. Please email us at weberan@co.larimer.co.us, or call (970) 498-7719 or Relay Colorado 711. "Walk-in" requests for auxiliary aids and services will be honored to the extent possible but may be unavailable if advance notice is not provided.

These meeting minutes were primarily prepared by staff, with the assistance of AI technology to support formatting and clarity. All content has been reviewed for accuracy.